

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MPOL, TH

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S VISIT TO UNGA: MEETING WITH THAI FOREIGN

MINISTER: FUTURE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 15284

1. FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN IN HIS TALKS WITH THE SECRETARY IN NEW YORK WILL WISH TO LEARN INTER ALIA WHAT THE US WANTS IN TERMS OF FUTURE MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND. AMBASSADOR ANAN ALSO SOUGHT TO TIMULATE A DISCUSSION OF THIS MATTER IN HIS RECENT TALKS WITH THE SECRETARY. WHILE WE CONTINUE TO DOUBT THAT THE CURRENT THAI GOVERNMENT WILL BE PREPARED TO TAKE DEFINITIVE POSITIONS ON WHATEVER WE PROPOSE, IT NEVERTHELESS IS CLEAR THAT IT DOES WANT TO OBTAIN OUR GENERAL VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT. IN ANY CASE, IT WOULD BE PRUDENT FOR US TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE THAI THINKING ON THIS QUESTION SO THAT WE CAN PLAN STRATEGY AND TACTICS FOR DEALING WITH THE GOVERNMENT THAT WILL TAKE OFFICE IN THAILAND AFTER THE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD VERY EARLY NEXT YEAR.

2. WITH THE SECRETARY'S APPROVAL OF THE INITIATION OF DISCUSSION AS PROPOSED BY AMBASSADOR ANAN, WE ASSUME WASHINGTON'S EFFORTS TO REACH DECISIONS UPON FUTURE US FORCE STRUCTURE IN THAILAND ARE BEING ACCELERATED. AS PART OF THAT PROCESS, THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME IDEAS WE HAVE BEEN DEVELOPING FOR WASHINGTON CONSIDERATION.

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3. THE DRAWDOWNS PROJECTED FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1974 ARE NOW

VIRTUALLY COMPLETE. THIS MEANS THAT WE HAVE LITTLE OR NOTHING IN RESERVE FOR USE IN THE EVENT THAT THE US MILITARY PRESENCE HERE BECOMES A HOT ISSUE DURING THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND SHOULD WE FIND IT POLITIC TO BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE FURTHER TROOP WITHDRAWALS. THE MINIMUM WE NEED FOR THIS PURPOSE IS A SMALL REDUCTION PACKAGE WHICH WE CAN PRODUCE IN THE EVENT THE BASE QUESTION DOES HEAT UP DURING THE CAMPAIGN. THIS SHOULD INCLUDE AT LEAST 3,000 MANPOWER SLOTS, A GOOD PART WHICH COULD BE OBTAINED THROUGH ATTRITION. DEPENDING ON HOW THE CAMPAIGN DEVELOPS, WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT, PROBABLY IN DECEMBER, THAT FOLLOWING FURTHER US-THAI DISCUSSIONS WE HAD JOINTLY AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ELIMINATE ANOTHER 3,000 US PERSONNEL AND AN APPROPRIATE NUMBER OF PLANES.

4. LOOKING FURTHER AHEAD, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO CARRY OUT MUCH HEAVIER REDUCTIONS (COMPARABLE TO THE CALENDAR 1974 CUT BACK) DURING THE LAST HALF OF FY 75 AND INTO FY 76. IN CARRYING OUT THESE REDUCTIONS, 23 297)\$--IF THE POLITICAL SITUATION HERE PERMITS--RETAIN SOME B-52 PRESENCE AND OTHER COMBAT AIR-CRAFT CAPABILITY THROUGH THE 1976 DRY SEASON, WITH A MAY-JUNE 1976 ADDITIONAL DEPARTURE.

5. AT THE END OF FY 76, BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS THAT WOULD DRASTICALLY ALTER CURRENT THAI ATTITUDES, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE LEVEL OF US MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THAILAND SHOULD EXCEED 7,000. IN FACT, WE SHOULD PROBABLY SHOOT FOR LESS THAN THAT FIGURE. THE COMPOSITION OF THAT REMAINING FORCE SHOULD BE LOOKED AT CAREFULLY WITH A VIEW TOWARD ACHIEVING A MODEST PROFILE CONSISTENT WITH OUR RATIONALE FOR KEEPING FORCES IN THAILAND, AND THAT RATIONALE SHOULD MAKE SENSE TO THE THAI. FOR EXAMPLE, IF WE KEEP F-4 OR RF-4 AIRCRAFT HERE, THIS SHOULD BE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ASSISTANCE TO THAI AIR DEFENSE AND FOR THIS WE MIGHT REQUIRE JOINT USE OF A THAI BASE IN THE NORTHEAST. WE COULD JUSTIFY ANOTHER PART OF OUR PRESENCE, PERHAPS, AS SUPPORTIVE OF THAI NAVY INTEREST IN A BASE ON THE ANDAMAN SEA. WE WOULD ASSUME THAT THE BULK OF THESE 7,000 OR FEWER PERSONNEL WOULD BE LOCATED IN THE SATTAHIP-UTAPAO AREA. BEING SOME DISTANCE FROM THE MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS, THESE FORCES WOULD POSSESS LOW VISIBILITY AND HOPEFULLY BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE THAI GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE.

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6. WE SHOULD USE THE OCCASION OF THE SECRETARY'S TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN TO INDICATE OUR LONG-TERM INTEREST IN RETAINING SOME UTILIZATION OF THE SATTAHIP-UTAPAO COMPLEX, IF THAT INDEED IS OUR DESIRE. WE ARE ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COMMERCIAL USAGE BY THE THAIS OF THE SATTAHIP PORT FACILITIES, AND IN THE LONG RUN THE JOINT USAGE OF UTAPAO FOR POSSIBLE COMMERCIAL AS WELL AS MILI-

TARY PURPOSES MIGHT BE CONTEMPLATED. WE SHOULD STRESS THE FACT THAT OUR INTERESTS IN THIS REGION ARE RELATED TO OUR DESIRE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GENERAL SECURITY UNDER WHICH ALL COUNTRIES IN THE REGION CAN LIVE IN PEACE, FREE FROM OUTSIDE PRESSURES. WE SHOULD STRESS THAT WE ARE STILL CONCERNED WITH AN EQUITABLE LIQUIDATION OF THE INDO-CHINA CONFLICT, BUT WE MUST ALSO CONSIDER OTHER POTENTIAL THREATS TO PEACE.

7. THIS MIGHT SET THE STAGE FOR A DISCUSSION OF SOVIET INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. WE SHOULD STRESS THAT THE SOVIETS DO NOT APPEAR TO BE INTERESTED IN THESE WATERS PER SE. RATHER, THEY APPEAR TO WANT A RELATIVELY FREE REIN IN THE OCEAN IN ORDER TO CREATE A SEAWAY CONNECTION BETWEEN THEIR BLACK SEA AND EASTERN SIBERIAN MARITIME PORTS. A SIZEABLE SOVIET COMBAT AND COMMERCIAL NAVAL PRESENCE, WITH GOOD PORTS OF CALL ALONG THIS SEAWAY, WOULD ALSO GIVE THEM, AS AN EXTRA BENEFIT, GREATER INFLUENCE ON MANY OF THE COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AS WELL AS ON CHINA AND JAPAN. CONSEQUENTLY, AS LONG AS THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE AND OTHER BASIC ISSUES OF ASIA REMAIN UNSETTLED, THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A ZONE OF PEACE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REMAINS UNLIKELY. IN BRIEF, THE INDIAN OCEAN STRATEGIC INTERACTIONS ARE DERIVATIVE AND ARE CLSOELY RELATED TO ISSUES DIRECTLY AFFECTING THAILAND, SUCH AS THE RELATIVE POWER POSITIONS OF CHINA AND THE USSR IN THE AREA AND THE FUTURE STABILITY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE SECRETARY MIGHT ALSO INDICATE THAT HE IS AWARE OF AND SUPPORTIVE OF THAI NAVAL INTEREST IN A BASE ON THE ANDAMAN SEA. THE SECRETARY'S PERSUASIVE USE OF THESE IDEAS MIGHT HELP EVENTUALLY TO RESTORE THAI WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT UNRESTRICTED USE OF UTAPAO, (INCLUDING INDIAN OCEAN RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS), AS WELL AS PREPARE THE GROUND FOR LONG-TERM ARRANGEMENTS FOR US UTILIZATION OF THE SATTAHIP-UTAPAO COMPLEX.

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8. AS YOU KNOW, WE MUST CONTINUE SPECIAL ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE LITTLE POTENTIAL APPEAL TO THAI SELF-INTEREST. I WOULD NOT RECOMMEND THAT THE SECRETARY DISCUSS THESE INSTALLATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AT THIS TIME. WITHIN THE USG, HOWEVER, WE SHOULD BE MOVING AHEAD REPIDLY WITH PLANS FOR REMOTING AT RAMASUN AND TAKING OTHER STEPS TO LOWER THE VISIBILITY OF THIS AND OTHER SPECIAL INSTALLATIONS.

9. PURSUANT TO DRAWDOWNS IN THE FORCES, OF COURSE, THERE WOULD BE CONSEQUENTIAL REDUCTIONS IN OR ELIMINATIONS OF COMMAND HEADQUARTERS.

10. AS WE MOVE OUR FORCES OUT OF THAILAND, ITBECOMES INCREASINGLY URGENT THAT WE COME TO GRIPS WITH THE QUESTION OF REENTRY RIGHTS.

AS WE HAVE ADVOCATED IN SEVERAL EARLIER MESSAGES, ONE WAY TO DO THIS WOULD BE THROUGH CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS WE MIGHT MAKE WITH THE RTG FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF BASES ON STANDBY STATUS. SUCH ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT BE A WAY TO COMMIT THE THAI TO OUR REENTRY WHILE DUCKING THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS CONNECTED THEREWITH AND COULD ALSO BE A WAY OF ADJUSTING THE RTG INTO TOLERABLE ACCEPTANCE OF FURTHER CUTS IN OUR MAP PROGRAM. OTHER APPROACHES TO REENTRY ARE ALSO POSSIBLE, INCLUDING ESTABLISHING A PATTERN OF JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES WHICH WOULD PROVIDE A BASIS FOR THE PERIODIC RETURN TO THAILAND OF USAF SQUADRONS AND OTHER ELEMENTS. THE SEVENTH FLEET ALREADY IS DOING SOMETHING OF THIS KIND WITH THE ROYAL THAI NAVY.

11. BASIC TO ALL OF THESE MATTERS IS A POLICY DECISION ON OUR PART AS TO WHAT TYPE OF LONGER-TERM PRESENCE WE WANT IN THAILAND, FOR WHAT PURPOSE, AND HOW MUCH WE ARE WILLING TO PAY FOR IT.

12. WE HOPE THAT THESE GENERAL IDEAS WILL BE USEFUL AS WASHINGTON MOVES TOWARD MORE SPECIFIC DECISIONS ON FUTURE US FORCE STRUCTURE IN THAILAND.

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